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Lay Catholic support for exiled Polish intellectuals in Britain, 1942-1962¹

“The test of our sincerity in the cause of justice is our concern for the resurrection of Poland, no less nay, even more, than the liberation of every other persecuted people”.²

This quote, taken from a radio broadcast delivered on Sunday 13 September 1941 by Arthur Hinsley, cardinal archbishop of Westminster, is a reminder of the important and enduring relationship between the Catholic Church in Britain and the Central European state of Poland. It was spoken within the context of the Second World War and the continuing devastation caused by the German occupation of the country two years previously, but it remained applicable to the Catholic Church’s attitude in the period following that war, when the inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe fell under the control of Soviet-influenced Communist governments. Poles, along with Czechoslovakians, Hungarians, Latvians and Lithuanians, fled their homelands to escape from religious persecution, arriving in Britain in their thousands during the late 1940s and 1950s. Many lay Catholic associations, independent from hierarchical

¹ I am extremely grateful to the Newman Association for supporting me with a generous stipend to research and write this article. I am also grateful to Dr James Kelly, Judith Smeaton and Christine Newman for their comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this article.

² *The Tablet*, 20 September 1941.

control, took it upon themselves to organise initiatives and raise funds for these exiles.

This article will examine the role played by one such lay society, the Newman Association, in supporting the tertiary education of Polish exiles in Britain in the Second World War and its aftermath. It will show how the Newman Association worked closely with other Catholic and non-Catholic bodies to create an international centre for the dissemination of information to Polish and other Central and East European exiles; to raise money for grants to support Polish students in British and Polish universities; and to arrange cultural exchange programmes between British and Polish intellectuals. Research of this nature provides a case study showing how the influx of Polish exiles provided a golden opportunity for an increasingly confident and educated Catholic middle class to assert itself in the Catholic Church in the years immediately prior to the Second Vatican Council.³

Despite the vast historiography on the Cold War, Catholic aid to political exiles has generally received little attention from historians. Historians of the Catholic Church have tended to concentrate on the relationship between the Church and Eastern Europe

³ The increased involvement of lay Catholics in the Church was one of the key achievements of the Second Vatican Council. For its effects, see Alana Harris, *Faith in the family: a lived religious history of English Catholicism, 1945-82* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

from a political or diplomatic level.⁴ Similarly, not one of the many studies by historians of post-war Polish migration to England refers to British Catholic support for Polish exiles.⁵ Relatively few published accounts have been written on the work of lay Catholic organisations with persecuted exiles from Central and Eastern European countries, with perhaps the only exception being the work of the Catholic Women's League in Polish displacement camps.⁶ The ecumenical work of the Sword of the Spirit and its political involvement in anti-Communism has received more attention but this

⁴ See Hansjakob Stehle (translated by Sandra Smith), *Eastern politics of the Vatican* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1981) and Jonathan Luxmore and Jolanta Babiuch, *The Vatican and the red flag: the struggle for the soul of Eastern Europe* (London and New York: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999).

⁵ Sheila Patterson, 'The Polish exiled community in Great Britain', *The Polish Review*, Vol. 61, no. 3, 69-97; Jerzy Zubrzycki, *Polish immigrants in Britain: a study of adjustment*, (Michigan, M. Nijhof, 1956); Thomas Lane, *Victims of Stalin and Hitler: the exodus of Poles and Balts to Britain* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004); K. Sword, N. Davies and J. Ciechanowski, *The formation of the Polish community in Great Britain, 1939-50* (London: University of London, 1989); and B.J.M. McCook, 'Education in war and exile: the Polish experience in Britain, 1940-1954' in A. Mazurkiewicz ed. *East Central Europe in exile, Volume 1 Transatlantic Migrations* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) 291-310.

⁶ Catholic Women's League, *History of the Catholic Women's League Relief and Refugee Committee* ([?London]: Swift Printers, 1981).

was primarily a clerical-led organisation.⁷ Recent research on the post-war lay Catholic apostolate also tends to be written from the perspective of the individual spiritual experience which has not included the communal and joint lay politico-theological activism inherent in the work of lay societies.⁸ This article will build upon this slim body of work by highlighting how the Newman Association could be seen to represent the ambitious vision of Catholic lay societies prior to the Second Vatican Council, thereby transcending the perceived parochial and inward-looking nature of such societies. The Newman Association was clearly not the only organisation concerned with the plight of post-war exiles but its largely professional and middle class membership and the contacts it could and did establish with the higher echelons of British and European institutions gave it an advantage when dealing with the spiritual and material needs of the educated Polish exile in the post-war world.

The very foundation of the Newman Association in 1942 was an expression of the growing confidence of the lay Catholic middle class during the middle decades of the

⁷ James Hagerty, *Cardinal Hinsley: priest and patriot* (Oxford: Family Publications, 2008), 303-322; and Michael J. Walsh, *From sword to ploughshare: Sword of the Spirit to Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1940-1980* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1980).

⁸ See Harris, *Faith in the Family*.

twentieth century.⁹ The organisation was established as a graduate society for both laity and clergy, developing out of a student organisation, the University Catholic Societies Federation. It was heavily influenced by John Henry Newman's concept of an educated laity and its active involvement in the Catholic Church and the wider society.¹⁰ Indeed its main object, as set out in the memorandum of association, was "to further the mission to the world of the Christian religion with particular reference to the Roman Catholic Church and in the light of the life and work of John Henry Newman, by promoting greater understanding of the Christian faith and the application of its principles to the contemporary world".¹¹ From its inception, therefore, the Association wished to foster a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith within the context of the

⁹ Hornsby-Smith has noted that Catholics after 1945 were generally "more upwardly socially mobile than the general population" and were influential at parish level and on various diocesan commissions at the national level. Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, *Catholic Education: the unobtrusive partner: sociological studies of the Catholic school system in England and Wales* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1978), 87. On the rise of the Catholic middle class, see J. Pereiro, 'Who are the laity?' in V.A. McClelland and M. Hodgetts, eds. *From without the Flaminian Gate: 150 years of Roman Catholicism in England and Wales 1850-2000* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), 167-191 at 177-8.

¹⁰ John Henry Newman's treatise on this subject were published in *The idea of a university* (London, 1852).

¹¹ Memoranda of Association (1947), Company Registration Papers, D1/A/1, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library.

contemporary world, actively encouraging its members to use their skills and knowledge to tackle the theological, social, political, and cultural questions of the day from a Catholic perspective. It was the purpose of the Association to utilise lay members of the Catholic Church in this mission and to seek “to bring greater recognition of the role of lay Catholics both as apostles to the church and as an important voice within the church for greater democracy and accountability.”¹² As a circular of the Newman Association noted:

“There is particular scope for the work of the Newman Association in this country at the present time. We see an expansion of Catholic participation in university life, in the legal profession, public administration, in education, the social services, in medicine, the sciences and the arts, indeed everywhere. There is a new generation, one which may either sink into mediocrity and compromise, or perhaps lapse altogether from the faith, if it is not given positive and imaginative leadership.”¹³

¹² Clifford Williamson, *The history of Catholic intellectual life in Scotland, 1918-1965* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 145-6.

¹³ Quoted in Williamson, *Catholic Intellectual Life in Scotland*, 149.

In 1950, the Newman Association boasted a membership of 1,500 Catholic graduates “drawn from various professions and walks of life”.¹⁴ As well as a National Council, it also formed auxiliaries, known as Newman Circles, in most of the major British cities, which were responsible for organising events at the local level. Unlike the Catholic Union, the Newman Association was not under the direct control of the Catholic hierarchy, seeing itself more as “a partner, if only a junior partner”.¹⁵

Context

The Newman Association’s aid to Polish exiles was affected by a range of social, theological and political factors which influenced Catholic lay activism towards European exiles more generally. Firstly, support for migrants was deeply rooted within Catholic social teaching, based around the idea of the common good, in which the social conditions necessary for the “participation and full development of human beings

¹⁴ H.O. Evennett, ‘Catholics and the universities’, in George A. Beck, ed. *The English Catholics, 1850-1950: essays to commemorate the centenary of the restoration of the hierarchy of England and Wales* (London: Burns & Oates, 1950), 291-321 at 320.

¹⁵ Williamson, *Intellectual Life in Scotland*, 146.

(including newcomers) need to be provided”.¹⁶ It had its origins in the Old Testament in God’s call to Abraham to abandon his home and migrate, and is also evident in the Gospel of Matthew – “you welcome the stranger, you welcome me”. The post-war settlement of 1945, and the advent of the Cold War, brought a fresh set of problems for the Church in dealing with migrants, or more accurately exiles, fleeing to England from religious persecution in the communist-controlled countries of Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁷ Pope Pius XII believed it was the duty of every Catholic to respond to the needs and aspirations of refugees and migrants and, prompted by this post-war displacement of millions of refugees, helped to found the International Catholic Migrant Commission to “facilitate the better coordination among Catholic organisations working with refugees and migrants”.¹⁸

¹⁶ Donald Kirwin and Jill Marie Gerschutz eds., *And You Welcomed Me: Migration and Catholic Social Teaching*, (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2009), x.

¹⁷ The word ‘exile’ will be used throughout this article rather than ‘refugee’ or ‘migrant’. It was felt this more accurately reflects the experience of those exiles who fled religious persecution. The exception are those Hungarians who arrived in Britain following the Hungarian Uprising in November 1956, who are referred to as ‘refugees’. This reflects the terms used in the contemporary sources.

¹⁸ The Office for Refugee Policy of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, *The dispossessed: a brief guide to the Catholic Church’s concern for refugees and migrants* (London: Colloquium, 2004), p. 10-11, 14-15.

Secondly, the Newman Association's lay Catholic and middle-class base would have felt an obvious connection with the largely professional Polish Catholic exile community arriving in Britain. This community had been steadily growing since the German and Russian invasion of the country in 1939 and the establishment of the Polish Government in Exile in London.¹⁹ At the end of the Second World War, many Poles remained in Britain residing in Polish Resettlement Camps and hostels. Between 1945 and 1949, a total of 100,875 aliens were admitted for residence as EVWs (European Voluntary Workers), of whom 29,400 were Poles (the next largest group was Latvians - 13,793).²⁰ In spite of the language and cultural barriers, this professional make-up enabled a greater assimilation unusual in the history of migration. As one historian has noted: "It is almost unique for an exile group to begin its life in a new country with a ready-made set or nucleus of institutions and associations, as the Poles in Britain did just after the Second World War." This included a range of political, cultural and social networks, welfare associations and recreational clubs, as well as a flourishing Polish-language press.²¹ The Polish influx included a substantial number of migrants from the middle and professional classes, such as civil servants, lawyers, teachers, doctors, teachers and engineers. Of all the Central and Eastern European nations, Poland had

¹⁹ Patterson, 'Polish exiled community', 69.

²⁰ Zubrzycki, *Polish immigrants in Britain*, 60.

²¹ Patterson, 'Polish exiled community', 74, 84.

retained the strongest devotion to the Catholic faith. This was not only reflected in the numbers – Poland had the highest percentage of Catholics (95%) – but also in the way in which its national traditions had become inseparable from the Catholic religion.²² The Polish Catholic ecclesiastical organisation in Britain had its own long history dating back to 1894 when the first Polish Roman Catholic Mission in London was established by Cardinal Vaughan. Following the Second World War, Mgr Staniszewski was appointed to the newly-created position of Vicar General to all Polish Catholics in England and Wales.²³ By 1953, it was estimated that there were 90,000 Polish churchgoers in Britain.²⁴ A comparison of the numbers of Catholic chaplains in 1951 reveals that the Polish community had overwhelmingly the largest number with 98 (the next largest was the Ukrainians with 11).²⁵ It is little wonder therefore, that the Newman Association, along with other Catholic lay societies with a largely Catholic middle-class

²² Zubrzycki, *Polish immigrants in Britain*, 122.

²³ Zubrzycki, *Polish immigrants in Britain*, 123.

²⁴ Zubrzycki, *Polish immigrants in Britain*, 125.

²⁵ Anthony E. C.W. Spencer, *Services for Catholic migrants, 1939-2008: background data from the archives and databank of the Newman Demographic Survey and the Pastoral Research Centre - A Report Prepared for the Newman Association Conference Catholic Migrants Opportunities and Challenges, at St. Ambrose College, Altrincham, 19 April, 2008* (Taunton: Russell-Spence, 2008), 16.

and professional base, prioritised the provision of financial, educational, social and spiritual support of the Polish exiles in Britain.

Thirdly, support for Polish exiles should also be seen within the broader context of the Catholic Church's historic hatred of Communism and the existential threat posed to it from such an ideology, in particular the Communist view on authority, tradition and social order was the very antithesis of Catholic thought. The Vatican had been warning of the dangers of communism since the early nineteenth century²⁶ but it was the post-war settlement, in which Stalin's Soviet Union swallowed up 10 million Catholics in Eastern Poland alone whilst new regimes were being installed in Central and Eastern European countries under pressure from the Soviet government, which brought home the reality of the situation to the Catholic Church.²⁷ The Church's reaction was ultimately fruitless. In response to the anti-Christian persecution in these Communist countries, the Vatican issued a decree on 1 July 1949, declaring it illegal to join or favour the Communist Party with all communists threatened with excommunication. This decree had little effect on the Communist governments, other than to encourage

²⁶ Luxmoore and Babiuch, *Vatican and the red flag*, xiii.

²⁷ Luxmore and Bubiach, *Vatican and the red flag*, 52.

these regimes to step up their anti-religious campaigns.²⁸ Certainly, anti-communism would have been a factor in the willingness of lay societies to assist Central and Eastern European exiles. For the Newman Association in particular, it was only by means of education about the Communist system and the Soviet Union through its lectures and conferences, as well as providing support for their education, that Communism could be combatted in the long-term. It should be stressed, however, that in the years immediately following the Second World War, the ‘materialism’ of the Western World and its effects on religion, as much as Communism in the East, was equally the target for Catholic action. Indeed, as a contemporary Newman Association publication argued:

“...nothing is more apparent or more ominous for the future than the materialism and opportunism to which the ruling circles of this country and the United States have reverted, under the influence of the Russian alliance, and the blunting of all the finer sensibilities, which five years of war have induced.”²⁹

²⁸ Luxmore and Bubiach, *Vatican and the red flag*, 65, 70.

²⁹ John Eppstein, *The Christian tradition in international relation* (London: Newman Association, 1944), 9.

Middle class lay societies, such as the Newman Association, did not always mirror the staunch anti-Communism of the hierarchy. This was perhaps a reflection of the Catholic intelligentsia's "growing sympathy towards the left" which grew out of the Spanish Civil War and the ill-fated alliance between the western democracies and the Soviet Union after 1941.³⁰

Finally, and in conjunction with anti-Communism, the influence of European federalism on post-war international relations also played a role in the perspective of lay Catholics on the global situation. Although the dream of European unity had existed for centuries, it was the impact of the Second World War which brought about a "concerted effort at unifying state practices that in time might lead to a comprehensive continental political community".³¹ A myriad of associations were established in an attempt to achieve the

³⁰ Williamson, *Catholic Intellectual Life in Scotland*. Indeed, the Newman Association's stance on theology was occasionally perceived to be too 'left-wing' by the Catholic hierarchy. On hearing that Thomas Aquinas was to be the subject of a course offered by the Glasgow Circle of the Newman Association, Canon Joseph Daniel was heard to complain: "Give them Aquinas and you'll turn them into Marxists", quoted in Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow: the uneasy peace. Religious tension in modern Scotland, 1819-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 237.

³¹ Derek W. Unwin, *The community of Europe: a history of European integration since 1945* (London: Longman, 1991), 7.

dream of greater European co-operation, including the United Europe Movement in Britain organised by Winston Churchill; the Catholic Nouvelles Équipes Internationales and the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe in France; and the Europa-Band in Germany. In 1946, the formation of the European Union of Federalism, consolidated groups in Belgium, Britain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland.³² The Newman Association was clearly an active supporter of these developments. It was noted in a history of the International Committee that “a deep and growing interest in the movements to develop a greater degree of economic and political unity within the Continent” and its contribution towards “both the universal Church and the world”, were of particular interest to many members of the Association.³³ The Christian dimension of European idealism was elaborated further in another Newman Association pamphlet, in which it was argued that Catholic tradition had essentially developed the idea of a ‘natural society of nations’ that heavily influenced the organisation of international society in the wider world thus making the ideological conditions for European integration possible in the first place.³⁴ This combination led to

³² Unwin, *The community of Europe*, 27.

³³ Francis Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation: a survey of the work of the International Committee of the Newman Association of Great Britain, 1942-1957* (London: Newman International Foundation, 1957), 24.

³⁴ Eppstein, *Christian tradition in international relations*, 9.

a modern conception of international relations which prioritised the fostering of international goodwill by “providing opportunities for men and women of different professional and other interests and backgrounds to meet their ‘opposite numbers’ from abroad, both for the sharing of information, knowledge and experience and for the gradual elimination of prejudice. This became not only the cornerstone of the Newman International Committee’s philosophy towards aiding Central and Eastern European exiles, but also the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, “with its world-wide and diverse programme of activities and with national ‘co-operating committees’ in member states”, as well as fellowship and scholarship schemes such as the Rhodes Trust, the Commonwealth and Rockefeller Funds and the Nuffield Foundation.³⁵

From the very outset of the formation of the Newman Association, international events were high on the agenda. Indeed, the history of the Newman Association began with a meeting of an “international committee” on 5 October 1941, formalised a year later in

³⁵ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 2.

the drawing up of a constitution for the organisation.³⁶ In February 1943, the Association responded to a request by the Government to set up “a body of voluntary organisations interested in material and moral relief in post-war Europe”³⁷. It was not until after the war that a more formal policy towards Polish exiles was instigated however. In November 1945, Frank Aylward, the chairman and secretary of the Association’s International Committee, together with the MP for Birmingham Moseley, Sir Patrick Hannon, met with a delegation from the Polish Catholic Graduate Group formed at the recent Pax Romana Congress. At this meeting, it was agreed that the International Committee would provide English-language classes for the benefit of those Poles arriving in England who had recently been liberated from concentration camps in Europe. The International Committee also expressed an interest in establishing an academic assistance committee to provide financial assistance to seminary and university students.³⁸ Almost from its very inception, therefore, the work of the Newman Association was tied to the fate of the Catholics of Central and Eastern Europe.

³⁶ Newman International Committee (NIC) Minutes, 6 November 1941, D1/E/1/1, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library; Newman Association, *A use of gifts: the Newman Association 1942-1992* (London: Newman Association, 1992), 18.

³⁷ NIC Minutes, 2 February 1943.

³⁸ NIC Minutes, 3 November 1945.

The Newman Association was just one of several organisations, lay Catholic and non-Catholic, whose aim was to assist in post-war European reconstruction. Rather than remain isolated working within their own spheres, such organisations soon realised that collaboration was essential to achieve their aims. The Newman Association, with its influential backing and professional contacts, was often in the vanguard of initiatives in this regard, receiving the backing of the Hierarchy.³⁹ For example, it worked closely with the Anglo-Polish Catholic Society and the Catholic Council for Polish Welfare, in matters affecting Polish relief. It was noted in the published history of the International Committee that “there has always been a close relationship both with organisations representing the exiles in Britain and with the priests concerned in them.”⁴⁰ The Association was also represented on governmental boards. For example, three International Committee members, Dr Helen Chow, Mr Murphy (also a senior official in the Ministry of Labour) and Miss Morath, sat on the Central European Affairs Committee and together they drew up a memorandum on the issue of Polish and other European exile. ⁴¹ Similarly, several members were actively involved in assisting with

³⁹ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 14.

⁴⁰ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 14.

⁴¹ NIC Minutes, 15 January 1949.

the British Committee of the Assisted Displaced Persons adoption scheme, offering their services as translators.⁴² In this capacity, the Newman Association was keen to avoid a conflict of interest with the National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW). A letter was sent to the Honorary Secretary of the NBCW clarifying that “the interests of the Newman Association would be confined to the educational side of any programme adopted”. As late as 1964, even with the limits placed on their work with Central and Eastern European countries, the International Committee continued to send representatives to a wide range of organisations in Europe, Africa and elsewhere, including the World University Service, United Nations Association, the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, the Standing Committee for the Economic and Social Work of the United Nations, and the Sword of the Spirit, Africa Centre.⁴³ Securing funding from other organisations was not always possible, particularly if there was perceived to be a more pressing need. In May 1951, for example, Dr Aylward’s application to the American National Catholic Welfare Council War Relief Service to obtain money for Polish relief was rejected because the organisation was engaged in German relief work. Aylward hoped that George Beck, bishop of Brentwood, might be able to write a letter

⁴² Newman Association, *Annual Report 1954-55*, 13.

⁴³ Newman Association, *Annual Report, 1964-65*, 4.

to the American bishop in charge of the National Catholic Welfare Council to change the situation.⁴⁴

Newman International Centre

It was an undoubtedly a lay Catholic initiative, the opening of a 'Newman Centre' by the Newman Association, which provided a focal point of support for exiled Central and Eastern Europeans. Acting as an international hub for overseas Catholic visitors, the Centre at 23 Hereford House, Park Street, London was given to the Association by a generous benefactor. It was opened on 3 October 1942 by David Mathew, auxiliary bishop of Westminster, and the Hon. Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, the United States Ambassador to the Allied Governments in Exile, with an audience of over 200 people from ten different countries.⁴⁵ The Centre quickly established itself as the cultural nucleus of the Polish exiled community. Through its hospitality service, it initially played an important role in introducing Catholics from abroad, including allied servicemen during their periods of leave and civilians to British families and therefore

⁴⁴ Newman International Foundation (NIF) Minutes, 16 May 1951, D1/B/3/3, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library.

⁴⁵ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 5.

“to provide a place which men and women from Europe and overseas could regard as ‘home’, to meet one another and form enduring friendships”. It is important to point out that functions were not only held for Eastern European countries, but also for groups and individuals from elsewhere, including receptions for parties from France, Germany, the United States, India, with other receptions arranged for delegates of conferences on all sorts of Catholic and non-Catholic topics, such as the Conference of Lawyers and the International Catholic Radio Movement.⁴⁶ In this sense, the Newman Centre reached out to Catholics and non-Catholics far beyond its initial remit and helped to establish the Centre’s “place in the intellectual life of London”. During the 1950s, the Association’s international events were included in ‘Today’s Arrangements’ in *The Times*⁴⁷ and, by 1957, it could claim that its Centre had, “become known over the past ten years to members of Pax Romana in more than 40 countries, and hundreds of visitors have called each year in search of information, advice and introductions”.⁴⁸ (p. 10)

⁴⁶ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 11.

⁴⁷ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 11.

⁴⁸ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 10.

An important cultural activity at the Centre was the international lecture-discussion meetings, with the main meeting taking place on the first Sunday of each month after Mass. There were also regular weekly meetings to hear a range of respected international speakers lecturing on a variety of topics, as well as monthly ‘parliamentary evening’ meetings. From these meetings, the audience “learned of the conditions of life and of Christianity abroad and obtained first-hand accounts of different parts of the British Commonwealth and the Colonial Empire, of the United States, South America and Asia, as well as of the Continent of Europe”.⁴⁹ Central and Eastern Europe began to receive greater attention at many meetings following the Yalta Conference in February 1945, in which “members were left in no uncertainty...of the evils to come”.⁵⁰ Talks were given on a variety of international topics but lectures on the situation in Central and Eastern Europe remained a popular choice of topic throughout the late 1940s and 1950s. In 1954, for example, a lecture by Dr W. Czerinski of Poland entitled ‘Central and Eastern Europe’ was delivered in the Newman Centre.⁵¹ There were some notable speakers on the Catholic Church in Poland. Count Balinski Jundzill, who was director of the Polish Institute of Catholic Action in Britain and a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre, “spoke eloquently” on the subject at Portman Square and was willing to repeat his

⁴⁹ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 6.

⁵⁰ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 6.

⁵¹ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1954-55, 10.

address to local circles. *The Newman* informed interested members that Count Jundzill had recently published a pamphlet on ‘The new moves in the Communist Struggle against the Church in Poland’ available for purchase.⁵²

The Newman Centre also hosted major international conferences on similar themes, many of which proved to be extremely popular. In 1952, a week-long conference was arranged on ‘Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe’, with speakers from eight different countries. This included lectures by the Polish prelate, Canon Stanislaus Belch, on the persecution of the Church in communist countries (entitled ‘The Silent Church’), and on the exiles themselves (‘The Exiles in Great Britain’). In the second session, Canon Belch gave a general account of the problems and difficulties faced by the 200,000 Catholic exiles in England, Scotland and Wales, reading reports collected from various exile groups on the work of their organisations. Commenting on this session, the Newman Association Annual Report hoped that an account of their situation could be published, “which is all too little appreciated by many of us”. Two years later, ‘The Silent Church’ was the title of another conference organised jointly by the Newman Association and the Union of Catholic Students, under the auspices of the University Catholic Federation. It was, as the Association’s Annual Report described, “an occasion

⁵² *The Newman*, December 1955.

for the renewal of old friendships and making of news ones among the exiles group in London”. The conference, which was mentioned in the minutes as “successful and well attended”, ended with a “much enjoyed concert”, in which Polish, Hungarian and Byelorussians sang or played music of their own countries⁵³

One of the biggest conferences organised by the Newman Association at Portman Square was on ‘Communism’ in 1952. Preparations began in March for a December conference with the Union of Catholic Students and notable authorities on the subject including Sir Desmond Morton, who was head of the Foreign Office’s counter-Bolshevist section in the early 1920s, advising.⁵⁴ Handbills were printed and a charge of 1/- was made for each lecture, with Newman members being admitted free to the Thursdays and Sunday lectures. The programme for the conference included speakers Rev. D. J. B. Hawkins, Richard O’Sullivan (Q.C.), and Sir David Kelly amongst others and were published in a special edition of *Blackfriars*.⁵⁵ The conference, which made a profit of £14, 7s, 6d, was a very successful one for the International Committee. The number of delegates present was not recorded but temporary loudspeakers were

⁵³ Newman Association *Annual Report, 1954-1955*, 2; NIC Minutes, 20 March 1954

⁵⁴ NIC Minutes, 21 March 1952

⁵⁵ NIC Minutes, 24 September 1952; *Blackfriars*, v.34, no. 395 (February 1953)

installed in the library because the audience was too large to be accommodated in the lecture room.⁵⁶ This proved to be such a successful addition that the loudspeakers were installed on a more permanent basis. A second conference on Communism was planned, focusing on Soviet foreign policy, and there was even a suggestion that a debate with a communist militant could be arranged. Courses of studies on the establishment of Communism were also proposed with local Circles potentially helping to promote courses or study circles on this subject.⁵⁷

These conferences at Portman Square were supported by similar themed events at the Newman Association's Summer Schools. The lecture programme of the Festival of Britain Ampleforth Summer School, for example, included, on 30 July at 11.30am, 'The Transition from Socialism' by Professor Michael Fogerty, economist, official fellow of Nuffield College, and author of articles and books on industrial organisation and social planning. Similarly, the July 1952 Summer School at Oriel College, Oxford, organised by the Newman Association, featured lectures on 'Modern Europe' and 'International Communism' by Sir Desmond Morton. as well as 'Europe in the Making' by Christopher Dawson. The syllabus for Session 9 included 'The Soviet in Central

⁵⁶ NIC Minutes, 26 November 1952.

⁵⁷ NIC Minutes, 15 December 1952.

Europe’, with the intention of investigating the “character of the agricultural communities, their peasant and Catholic character, their political background before today’, as well as ‘What has happened and is happening to them and what the West is trying to do, and what can be done’.⁵⁸ Even as late as 1960, Communism was still proving to be a popular topic for the society’s Summer School at the University of North Staffordshire which included a lecture on ‘Marx and Communism’⁵⁹.

An essential element of life at the Newman Centre was its social aspect for exiles from different countries. These ‘casual meetings’ allowed the opportunity for people to form friendships and for networks to be established. In 1955, the ‘At Home’ aspect of the Sunday afternoon meetings was expanded “in order to give Newman members and visitors from abroad the opportunity to meet one another.”. This included the hosting of three large receptions during the year for members of Central and Eastern European countries, as well as students and graduates from Africa and Asia. At one reception, His Grace the Apostolic Delegate was present.⁶⁰ As Thomas Lane has argued, such events

⁵⁸ Papers of the Newman Association Summer Schools, D1/H/1, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library.

⁵⁹ Papers of the Newman Association Summer Schools.

⁶⁰ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1954-1955, 10, 16.

allowed Poles to feel integrated into the émigré community, thus inhibiting the possibility of developing mental illnesses, such as depression, schizophrenia or hysteria. Polish exiles were far more likely than British nationals to suffer from such illness. For example, the rate of admissions to mental hospitals for all categories of Polish exiles between 1946 and 1950 was 4.42 per thousand males in stark contrast to the 0.86 of British-born admissions.⁶¹

Although the Newman Association was aimed at and organised by lay members of the Catholic Church, and thereby free from the direct control of the Catholic hierarchy, patronage was still sought by the Newman Association's International Committee when organising events. As early as 1944, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Griffin visited the Centre within a short time of his appointment and encouraged others to take an interest in its work.⁶² The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Godfrey, who visited the Centre in 1949, was described as a "real friend to the Association" and willing to give advice when needed.⁶³ Following Godfrey's translation to the archbishopric of Westminster in 1954, members of the Association were delighted to hear of the assurances of his

⁶¹ Lane, *Victims of Stalin and Hitler*, 222.

⁶² Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 6.

⁶³ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1954-1955, 10.

successor, Archbishop G.P. O'Hara, at his first visit to the Newman Centre on 18 September. At this visit, the archbishop spoke of his willingness to give the same support as his predecessor towards the international activities of the Newman Association.⁶⁴ Indeed, he was instrumental in helping to organise a special reception for exiles from Poland and other Eastern European countries on 14 July 1956. This patronage continued into the late 1950s. On 13 April 1958, for example, a small party was arranged by the International Committee at the Newman Centre, to welcome Mgr Marian Rechowicz, the rector of the Catholic University of Lublin in Poland, with Bishop Craven, auxiliary bishop of Westminster, greeting him.⁶⁵ These special events were often advertised in circulars sent out to the main exile groups in London and to members of the Association and it was often expected that the members present paid a nominal charge to help to defray expenses.⁶⁶ For their part, the hierarchy were more than willing to patronise an organisation which accorded with the foreign policy of the Catholic Church generally. In the Foreword to *Fifteen Years*, Archbishop Godfrey was unstinting in his praise for the Association's work:

⁶⁴ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1954-1955, 15.

⁶⁵ *The Newman*, May 1958.

⁶⁶ NIC Minutes, 11 June 1956.

“During this period (the last fifteen years) there has been considerable tension in international affairs and the Association has done much to foster understanding, to proclaim and defend Christian ideals and to explain the Catholic standpoint on the questions of the day . . . The Newman Association has played its part in the fulfilment of the Divine mandate to teach all nations, not only by its activities at the International Centre in Portman Square but also by its participation in Pax Romana and its co-operation with UNESCO . . . I assure the members of the Newman Association of my unqualified support for their apostolic endeavours for international understanding, based on the teachings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”⁶⁷

Despite unwavering support from the hierarchy, financing the Centre remained a constant problem for the Newman Association’s International Committee in its early years. On 8 May 1946, Hereford House was forced to close because the Committee could not afford for it to remain open. It was not until December 1948 that a new building, 31 Portman Square in London, was officially opened by Cardinal Griffin.⁶⁸ To avoid the financial issues which had beset its previous home, a charitable trust was

⁶⁷ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, *Fifteen Years*, Foreword.

⁶⁸ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 9.

established, the Newman International Foundation on 8 April 1946, “to support the international programme of the Association and to acquire and administer an International Centre”. Contributions were required from members, who were urged to contribute an additional sum of money annually to the International Foundation on top of their Newman membership subscription.⁶⁹ This was fully supported by the Hierarchy with the Cardinal promising £1,000 a year for two years for the maintenance of an international office and a further £1,000 a year for several years for the support of the proposed new International Centre.⁷⁰ Funds were also sought from a number of charitable trusts including the Carnegie Foundation, the Nuffield Foundation, the Pilgrim Trust and the Commonwealth Fund. It was also hoped that Catholics from the staff of working embassies could be persuaded to join to “strengthen the international atmosphere of the Centre.”⁷¹ Regular collections were taken from churches in support of the International Centre. For example, on European Unity Sunday in January 1950, parish priests were asked to preach on the work of the Newman International Committee and to take a special collection.⁷² This allowed the Newman International Centre the financial stability to establish itself on a firmer footing, with the Newman

⁶⁹ NIF Minutes, 14 June 1946.

⁷⁰ NIF Minutes, 14 September 1946.

⁷¹ NIF Minutes, 7 December 1947.

⁷² NIF Minutes, 19 January 1950.

International Fund trustees recording an annual turnover of £12,000 in 1952. It still occasionally had to call upon its members for additional assistance. A printed appeal to the London Circle members, dated 7 July 1950, requested financial assistance to help to relieve a debt of £1,500 for the purchase of furniture and equipment for the Centre:

“We feel that members of the London Circle have a moral obligation to assist the Trustees in discharging their obligations to the bank. Moreover, this assistance is needed immediately! We are, therefore, appealing to you personally to let us have a donation at least £1 per member – immediately. If our members respond to this appeal, as we hope they will, we should soon reach our first objective of raising £500.”.⁷³

The Newman Centre was run almost exclusively by volunteers. A House Committee, which included representatives from the Newman Association Council and the London Newman Circle, administered the Centre and advertisements were regularly sent to the Catholic newspapers, with posters to be displayed on church doors in Greater London.⁷⁴

⁷³ NIF Minutes, 7 July 1950.

⁷⁴ NIF Minutes, 7 December 1947. For an example of a Newman Association advertisement see *The Tablet*, 15 November 1947, 318.

By 1955, the Association's Annual Report was praising "the 50 or more Newman members who in one capacity or another provide the voluntary help which enables the Centre to be maintained".⁷⁵

The concentration of the Newman International Committee's activities towards Polish exiles in London reflected the large numbers of Polish exiles residing in the capital (33,000), but there were also significant numbers in other counties, notably Lancashire (14,500), West Riding of Yorkshire (13,500) and Staffordshire (5,500).⁷⁶ The International Committee did try to assist the local circles in arranging lectures and conferences on international topics by recommending suitable speakers from Britain and abroad.⁷⁷ When the Newman Association established its Exiles Group on a more formal basis in 1955, it was suggested that the Group should be extended throughout the country and that Veritas – the Polish University Catholic Association - could supply names of the members in local circles who would be willing to assist with this action.⁷⁸ By the late 1950s, however, it was clear that the Association had not been altogether

⁷⁵ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1954-1955, 16.

⁷⁶ Lane, *Victims of Stalin and Hitler*, 205.

⁷⁷ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 12.

⁷⁸ NIC Minutes, 6 February 1955.

successful in this regard. In the Association's Annual Report of 1957-58, it was noted that the high level of the international lecture programme could only be maintained if the local circles in different parts of the UK would share the burden of the work: "a general statement summarising possible lines of local action" was sent out to all the Hon. Secretaries of the circles, advising that a special Liaison Officer should be appointed to deal exclusively with international work.⁷⁹ Naturally, the London Circle, with its close ties to the national committee and with the largest Polish exile population as a potential audience, benefitted most. Lectures and conferences on Poland, Russia and communism seemed to be a regular fixture of the programme. The London Circles Committee for the Lay Apostolate conference in 1961 was well attended, with a speaker in the first session delivering a lecture on Communism, in which he questioned whether any alliance is possible, or even permissible, with an ideology "completely materialistic in outlook and utterly opposed to a God-theory".⁸⁰ Response to national events was also swift, with an appeal in December 1956 for its members to help to support a collection for Hungarian exiles following the Hungarian Uprising and a bazaar to raise money for

⁷⁹ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1957-1958, 5.

⁸⁰ This speaker was not named in the minutes. London Newman Circle Minutes, 17 March 1961, D1/F/2/15/1, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library.

the same cause the following month.⁸¹ The records for other circles are patchy for this period and those that do survive barely mention the subject of Central and Eastern Europe as part of their activities, concentrating instead on theological issues. One of the few to record a lecture on the subject was the Swansea Circle. It reported on 5 November 1957 that a Fr Eugen Boylan, priest of Caldey, addressed a record audience of 120 people on ‘Communism’, somewhat controversially advocating the unification of Christianity to save Christendom from the threat of Communism. This, the meeting reported, “aroused a lively discussion”.⁸²

Newman Scholarships

As well as providing a cultural hub for the Polish Catholic intellectual community, the Newman Association assisted those students unable to take their degrees in their home country because of the suppression of Polish universities by the communist government. In 1946, the Association decided to set up a programme to help fund scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate students to undertake a course at a British university, as

⁸¹ Newman Association, *London Circle Bulletin*, December 1956/January 1957, D1/F/2/15/3, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library.

⁸² Swansea Circle Minute Book, 5 November 1957, D1/F/2/28/1, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library.

well as aiding Polish graduates seeking employment in Britain. A grant had already been offered to an unnamed Polish airman to study at Oriel College, Oxford, in 1943 but it was becoming increasingly clear that a more formalised arrangement was required. To fund the venture, an additional charitable fund, the Newman Educational Foundation, was established with Professor A. J. Allmand⁸³ elected as chairman and Peter Kerr, the 12th Marquess of Lothian, as Treasurer. This fund was active until 1949, when its functions were absorbed into the Newman International Foundation.⁸⁴ The aim of the Educational Foundation was twofold: firstly, “to enable the exiles to preserve the continuity of their Christian culture” and, secondly, “to enable them to make some useful contribution to their own countries when they returned and to the countries of their adoption while they were in exile”.⁸⁵ The Association’s stance could thus be viewed as an attempt to bolster the defence of Christianity against the communist persecution of religion in the Soviet satellite states. Through this work of educational assistance, the Association was required to collaborate with Veritas which set up a

⁸³ Professor Allmand received a papal knighthood in 1950 for his role in the Newman Educational Foundation. See his obituary in *The Times*, 18 August 1951.

⁸⁴ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 16.

⁸⁵ Newman Educational Foundation Minutes, 25 March 1946, D1/B/3/3, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library.

committee of four Polish professors to deal with the scholarship applications.⁸⁶ Lord Lothian agreed to send a letter to the Catholic newspapers, as well as *The Times*, *Telegraph*, *Spectator* and *New Statesmen*, and to notify the Catholic hierarchy, publicising the initiative.⁸⁷

The educational assistance programme faced notable difficulties from the outset in post-war Britain. British universities were overcrowded and Central and Eastern European exiles were required to compete for university places with British servicemen returning from overseas.⁸⁸ The first task of the Association was therefore to work with influential figures within the universities to allocate places for Polish exiles. Initial arrangements were made with Irish institutions, perhaps from the belief that they were more likely to be sympathetic towards creating places for Catholic students. President A. O'Rahilly of University College, Cork, agreed to the Foundation's request for twelve Polish students to be given places and to be subsidised directly by the Newman Educational Foundation itself, with a further grant from official sources to be received later. In December 1946,

⁸⁶ NEF Minutes, 25 March 1946.

⁸⁷ NEF Minutes, 5 July 1946. For example, notification of the aims of the Newman Educational Foundation was published in *The Times*, 16 August 1946.

⁸⁸ Sword, Davies and Ciechanowski, *The formation of the Polish Community in Great Britain, 1939-50*, 278.

it was reported that Professor Conway of University College, Dublin, and Fr. Browne of Galway had offered twenty fee-paying places to Polish students. The project was extended and, at one stage, 150 Polish students had been accepted onto courses at University College, Dublin, and other Irish universities alongside official grants totalling over £100,000. The money for the Foundation was raised through appeals to Newman members, as well as donations from the Apostolic Delegate, the Catholic Council for Polish Welfare (established by the Hierarchy to collect funds for all aspects of Polish relief), the Polish Research Centre, the Ministry of Education, and other bodies. The sum of £11,000 was even provided to enable Veritas to open a hostel for Polish students at Cork.⁸⁹

However, the reality was one of financial hardship for these students. Initial responsibility for post-war Polish education fell to the Interim Treasury Committee for Polish Questions, an administrative body within the Treasury led by Sir William Edy, with significant Polish representation including the Polish diplomat and anti-Communist

⁸⁹ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 16-17.

campaigner, Count Edward Raczyński.⁹⁰ In December 1946, the Interim Treasury Committee could not afford to pay the Polish students arriving in Dublin and Galway. It was only the efforts of Count Belinski, who managed to divert funds earmarked for Cork to be used as a loan for Dublin, that prevented the students from effectively being abandoned.⁹¹ At the next meeting in January 1947, it was further reported that the Interim Treasury Committee had been unable to assist the Irish students and it was hoped that an appeal within Ireland itself would alleviate the problem.⁹² Two months later, the Educational Foundation trustees contacted the Catholic Council for Polish Welfare seeking help for the Polish students in Ireland. In July, the CCPW provided a donation of £2,500 and the Interim Treasury Committee was also able to raise an additional £2,500 to ensure that sufficient money was available to maintain the Polish students until September 1947. Lady Lovat also reported that she had arranged a summer ball in aid of the Polish Students' Welfare.⁹³ The Polish Resettlement Act in March 1947 transferred the responsibility for Polish education from the Interim

⁹⁰ McCook, 'Education in war and exile', 298. For a recent biography of Raczyński see Krzysztof Kania, *Edward Bernard Raczyński, 1891–1993, Dyplomata i Polityk*, (Wydawnictwo Neriton, Warszawa, 2014).

⁹¹ NEF Minutes, 14 December 1946.

⁹² NEF Minutes, 28 January 1947.

⁹³ NEF Minutes, 8 March 1947.

Treasury Committee to the Committee for Education of Poles in Great Britain led by George Gator.⁹⁴ This ensured that Polish students were eligible for Ministry of Education grants, with £50,000 provided for sixty scholarships for Irish universities. There were obvious advantages for the British government to aid the education of Polish exiles. A *Brief* to the Ministry of Education in February 1947 stated that it was:

“wise...to promote the education of a substantial number of Poles. Whether the Poles eventually stay here or emigrate overseas, the fact that they have received British education should assist them in finding employment. If they decide to return to Poland, the fact that they have received British education should also be of benefit and we should hope to be able to count them as ‘unofficial ambassadors’ in the future.”⁹⁵

There would now be little need for the Educational Foundation to offer its scholarship programme to Polish undergraduates in Ireland but, as Dr Aylward pointed out, “it was clear that these 60 scholarships would not have been awarded if the Newman

⁹⁴ McCook, ‘Education in war and exile’, 298.

⁹⁵ Quoted in McCook, ‘Education in war and exile’, 299.

Educational Foundation had not taken the initiative with the Irish negotiations in the previous year.”.⁹⁶

The Newman Educational Foundation turned its attention to English universities. In October 1948, two research students were being helped at the University of London with money available for a further student. These included one student researching the history of marriage and the chairman of Veritas, Professor Paul Skwarcysnski.⁹⁷ Many of the exiles receiving aid to study in England were often in a similar precarious financial situation to those at Irish universities, particularly once the Educational Foundation was subsumed into the International Foundation and funds began to dry up. Between 1950 and 1952, the minutes of the Newman International Fund meetings regularly noted the difficulties faced by Polish beneficiaries and extra money was often allocated to relieve their financial difficulties. At one stage, even the Apostolic Delegate was contacted to help fund their fees and expenses.⁹⁸ Even following graduation, the difficulties continued. In February 1953, for example, the Association contacted the Catholic Professors of Law in an attempt to find Professor Skwarczynsk an academic

⁹⁶ NEF Minutes, 11 October 1947. Between its formation in April 1947 and demise in September 1954, over £9 million was expended for Polish education. McCook, ‘Education in war and exile’, 299.

⁹⁷ NEF Minutes, 11 October 1947.

⁹⁸ NIF Minutes, 25 September 1950, 2 January 1951.

post in England “so that he might be led away from accepting an offer which he has received of a well-paid appointment in Abyssinia” which would mean the loss of his services to Veritas. Recent events in Poland and the death of his mother had upset him and, in his desperation, was willing to accept a £5 a week job as a clerk which, Dr Aylward argued, could affect his academic job prospects.⁹⁹ It was agreed to offer Prof Skwarczynsk £25 immediately from a donation of a Yorkshire friend of the Association.¹⁰⁰ This was clearly not enough to persuade him to stay as, eight months later, he accepted the post in Abyssinia.¹⁰¹

By the early 1950s, however, these endeavours were beginning to bear fruit. The Newman Association’s Annual Report confidently proclaimed a number of successes. The trustees noted that, with the exception of the Catholic Council of Polish Welfare, “no Catholic organisation in Britain has done so much to assist the Poles” with the scholarship programme.¹⁰² Although the work was not continuing at the same rate as in

⁹⁹ Professor Skwarczynsk’s difficulties in finding employment were symptomatic of the wider situation for skilled Polish refugees, with only a third having jobs corresponding to their skills between 1947 and 1950. Lane, *Victims of Stalin and Hitler*, 200.

¹⁰⁰ NIF Minutes, 5 February 1953.

¹⁰¹ NIF Minutes, 27 October 1953.

¹⁰² NIF Minutes, 19 January 1950.

the early years, the report noted that “many Polish and other students who have received aid in the past have now obtained their first or final degrees at the University of London or elsewhere, one post-graduate student, who was ordained a priest in the United States in June last, is preparing for missionary work. The second has just recently been appointed to a professorship of Law.”¹⁰³

Exchange Visits

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the political situation in Eastern Europe was beginning to improve slowly and the Newman Association became more involved with facilitating tours to and from Poland. A three-week study tour of Britain, for example, was arranged by the International Committee for a group of Polish visitors from professional circles. This was organised by Dr F. Sawicki, a Catholic physician from Warsaw, who invited the Klub Intelligencji Katolickiej (Warsaw Club of Catholic Intellectuals) to England. This club was one of a limited number of organisations established to provide a “discreet outlet for non-Marxist intellectuals in major Polish cities” following the appointment of Wladyslaw Gomulka as the Communist leader of

¹⁰³ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1952-1953, 12.

Poland in October 1956.¹⁰⁴ These Polish intellectual groups and other media organisations proved vital for providing the Association with information on the religious situation, as the International Committee was keen to recognise:

“It was from Jacek Wozniakowski, Jerzy Turowicz and others connected with the independent Catholic press, re-established after October 1956, that we learned most about the position and needs of Catholics in Poland today. Without the possibility of other organised groups and societies responsibility lies heavily upon them, upon the small group of independent Catholic deputies in the Sejm, and upon the Klubs which now exist in five major cities.”

The group arrived on 28 April 1960, meeting various representatives of the Polish community in London, including Mgr Staniazewski, the Polish Vicar General, and Count Jan Bellinski-Jundzill, secretary of the Catholic Council for Polish Welfare and Chairman of Polish Catholic Action, as well as Canon Stanislaus Belch, the first Veritas chaplain. They were also entertained by Newman members in London, Oxford,

¹⁰⁴ Luxmore and Babioch, *Vatican and the Red Flag*, 79-80.

Birmingham, Manchester, York, Cambridge and other places.¹⁰⁵ The tour of the provincial areas was particularly appreciated by the Polish visitors who noted the similarities in local customs:

It was most interesting for us to note that some of these are, in spite of all differences, the same as those we meet in Poland...Differences between different countries are not as essential as they look, we are all at a more or less advanced stage of the same process of renewal, and the growing awareness of this basic unity and universalism of world Catholicism is surely among the most important and most significant developments of today...

The English Catholic community was far from united in support of this visit. A report in the *Catholic Herald* questioned the Newman Association's part in allowing "Communist collaborators" into the country. The International Committee's response was to "damp down any correspondence that may take place in the paper", publishing a supportive article in *The Newman* to allay any fears of the provincial circles.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ NIC Minutes, 20 January 1960.

¹⁰⁶ NIC Minutes, 25 May 1960.

Following the visit, a hope was expressed for a return trip to Poland and this did indeed occur the following year. In an article entitled “Lublin: so near and yet so far” by Dr J. M. Capes, a description was given of a visit by two Newman delegates to Lublin between 5-25 August 1961, who were guests of the Klub Intelligencji Katolickiej. The purpose of the visit was “to attend a seminar organised by the Club, on ‘European Tradition and the Future’, to see something of Polish life and culture, and to consider some of the problems facing Polish Catholics today...”.¹⁰⁷ The Annual Report of the Newman Association the following year noted how overseas contacts had been maintained by arranging receptions for overseas visitors, including a group of Polish newspaper editors.¹⁰⁸

The Newman Association also began to develop a strategy to assist students in the Catholic University of Lublin by providing grants to study in England. Mrs Greene, the Hon Secretary of the Oxford Newman Circle, contacted the International Committee to ask if they could accommodate Professor Mroczkowski, head of the Department of English at the Catholic University of Lublin, who hoped to visit Britain and assist in this

¹⁰⁷ NIC Minutes, 26 April 1961.

¹⁰⁸ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1962-63, 6.

matter.¹⁰⁹ Professor Mroczkowski was given a grant by the British Council to visit Britain and attend a meeting with the Chairman of the International Committee. At this meeting, it was agreed that two one-year scholarships could be offered at Oxford University for post-graduate research assistants from Lublin (one man and one woman). A donation of £50 had been offered for this purpose.¹¹⁰ The two Lublin scholars, Miss Janicka and Mr Swieczkowski, arrived in England in February 1957, with Miss Janicka's fees and expenses being paid jointly by the Catholic Women's League and the Newman International Fund.¹¹¹ The following month, it was agreed to contact the Oxford Newman Circle to arrange hospitality for the visiting scholars.¹¹² This arrangement was not without controversy, particularly when an article in *The Tablet* alleged that "a Polish professor recently returned from Oxford", who it was assumed by the Association to be Professor Mroczkowski, had made disparaging remarks about the conditions of life for students at Oxford.¹¹³ Fr Kilderny considered that it "ill became him (Prof M.) in the circumstances so to comment".¹¹⁴ However, as it turned out, Mr

¹⁰⁹ Husband of the English novelist, Graham Greene. NIC Minutes, 6 February 1956.

¹¹⁰ NIC Minutes, 19 November 1956.

¹¹¹ NIC Minutes, 4 February 1957.

¹¹² NIC Minutes, 4 March 1957.

¹¹³ *The Tablet*, 8 December 1956, 515.

¹¹⁴ NIC Minutes, 17 December 1956.

Grocholski reported that “it was now certain that Prof. Mroczkowski was innocent”.

Further links were cemented by the Association’s agreement with the Rector of Lublin University to provide a one year lectureship in Lublin for a Polish scholar living in England.¹¹⁵ By the end of 1958, however, the Association seemed to be handing over the financial management of the Polish students to Veritas, who agreed to accept financial responsibility for four students of Lublin University - Dr Ludomir Bienkowski, Mr Eugeniusz Zwolski, Mr Ryszard Bender and Mr Czeslaw Deptula. The Newman Association was only responsible for ensuring that the students were given official letters of introduction to allow them to obtain Polish passports and British visas.¹¹⁶

Material support

The Newman Association’s support for the education of Polish students was also supplemented by material aid in the purchase of books and other equipment. This had been taking place since the 1940s. In May 1946, the chaplain of Veritas, Fr Belch, required the Newman Association to act as an agent in the forwarding of translated religious books and papal encyclicals to Poland. Veritas had been unable to send the

¹¹⁵ NIC Minutes, 28 April 1958.

¹¹⁶ Report of the Hon. Secretary of the Newman International Committee, 8 September 1958.

books themselves owing to difficulties with the Polish authorities but the Newman Association was able to negotiate with the Polish Red Cross for the delivery of regular batches to the Caritas organisation in Gydnia. Polish subscriptions paid for the purchase and transport of the books so the Newman International Committee were not required to make any financial contribution.¹¹⁷ In November, Miss Gunter was able to report that the plan had been working successfully with a total of £12,000 worth of books being sent from London to Gydnia, with Caritas distributing these books throughout Poland.¹¹⁸ Aside from books, the Association also agreed to send food parcels to the relations of Polish exiles so that the recipients could send these parcels on to others.¹¹⁹ Larger gifts were also offered, including a private automatic telephone exchange for the use of Archbishop's House in Warsaw.¹²⁰

Despite the difficulties in raising money for educational assistance towards Lublin scholars, the Newman Association was keen to continue its links with the university through the provision of material gifts. In 1956, money was being collected to provide

¹¹⁷ NIC Minutes, 5 May 1946.

¹¹⁸ NIC Minutes, 2 November 1946.

¹¹⁹ NIC Minutes, 15 February 1953.

¹²⁰ Letter from Cardinal Wyszinski to the Newman Association, quoted in NIC Minutes, 5 May 1962.

books for the University¹²¹ but by 1960 the Association was willing to send more substantial gifts. In a letter from Lawrence Roche, trustee for the Newman Association, to Rt. Rev. Mgr M. Rechowicz, rector of Catholic University of Lublin, a decision was made to offer the university machinery for a canteen, including a dishwashing machine, potato peelers, mincing machines, bread cutting machines, meat cutting machines for slicing, a kitchen thermos, butter-pat machines, and a service counter.¹²² In the Soviet satellite states these items would have been impossible to buy domestically and, initially at least, the Association faced great difficulty in even obtaining clearance for this letter to reach its intended recipient. A letter from F.R. McGinnis from the Outward Bag Room, Warsaw, of the Foreign Office, to Mgr Roche, advised Roche that, because of foreign office regulations, he (McGinnis) had been required to destroy his letter to the rector. He had nevertheless been able to pass the information in Roche's letter on to a friend from the university who would attempt to secure clearance from the Polish authorities to allow for the import of the equipment. This was clearly a delicate operation. "I should perhaps mention", McGinnis's letter concluded, "that we have to be careful about our contacts with Catholic circles in their interests, and that I am not

¹²¹ Report of a meeting of the Central and Eastern European Group, quoted in NIC Minutes, 22 October 1956.

¹²² Letter from Mgr Roche to the Rector of Lublin University, undated, International Committee Country Files: Poland, D1/E/2/19, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library.

therefore able to keep in very frequent touch with the university.”¹²³ Negotiations continued into the following year. A further letter from Roche to the Polish Embassy requested clearance for Mr Joseph Audry of the firm Bernadette Export in London, who were responsible for supplying the equipment, to enter Poland and speak to the university authorities on certain technical issues associated with the equipment.¹²⁴ A letter from the rector to Professor Aylward confirmed that the equipment had eventually arrived.¹²⁵

Support for other Central and Eastern European countries

Although Cardinal Griffin expressed his hope that “you will also include in this work Catholic exiles from other countries in Central and Eastern Europe”, there was no conscious effort by the Association to do this. Poland may have been only one of a number of European countries (and indeed countries from all over the world) that the

¹²³ Letter from F.R. MacGinnis to Lawrence Roche, 7 December 1960, International Committee Country Files: Poland.

¹²⁴ Letter from Lawrence Roche to the Polish Embassy, 23 February 1961, International Committee Country Files: Poland.

¹²⁵ Letter from the Rector of Lublin University to Francis Aylward, [undated], International Committee Country Files: Poland.

International Committee were keen to assist but it did receive the lion share of attention and assistance.¹²⁶ In terms of the scholarship programme, a meeting on providing assistance for students other than Poles was arranged and it was suggested by Lord Lothian in a further meeting that efforts should be made to “get the odd Slovak or Jugo-Slav etc, into a British university’ if a further appeal for donations was successful. In January 1947, Dr Aylward reported that there had been requests for relief for Slovak and Croat students currently in Austria and Italy, as well as Ukrainian groups in Belgium but “no money was available for such students”.¹²⁷ In July 1948, Mr O’Connell, a Newman Educational Foundation trustee, reported that many requests had been received from groups of students in Central Eastern Europe but the Trustees had no money available to help them.¹²⁸ The initiative therefore seems to have been targeted at Poles almost exclusively.

This is not to suggest that the problems of other Eastern-bloc countries were ignored, more that support tended to be sporadic and distant. For example, arrangements were made to protest against the proposed visit by Marshal Tito, leader of Communist Yugoslavia, to Britain in 1952. Newman members were encouraged to write to MPs and

¹²⁶ NEF Minutes, October 1946, 14 December 1946.

¹²⁷ NEF Minutes, 28 January 1947.

¹²⁸ NEF Minutes, 11 October 1947.

the Foreign Office to protest on religious grounds “against the flagrant denial of basic human rights to Catholics, Orthodox and others in Yugo-Slavia” and to possibly involve itself with arranging a meeting between Tito and Catholic MPs.¹²⁹ The Newman Association also sent letters to the Vatican and to the Hungarian Prime Minister following the arrest of Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty, Primate of Hungary, in December 1948. He was subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment on charges including espionage, currency speculation and attempting to overthrow the government.¹³⁰

The response to the plight of Catholic Hungarians following the brutal suppression of the Hungarian Uprising in 1956 was also apparent. Close contacts were made with relief bodies aiding Hungarians who came to England from November 1956 onwards and several Newman Circles were actively involved in assisting Hungarians arriving in different parts of the country.¹³¹ The Newman Association even decided to reopen its International Foundation account and there were discussions with Fr. A. Molnar, the Hungarian Chaplain, over the possibility of helping undergraduate and postgraduate Hungarian students to secure university places in British universities. The Association, however, realised that raising any funds in addition to the £40,000 already acquired

¹²⁹ NIC Minutes, 26 November 1952.

¹³⁰ Luxmore & Babiuch, *Vatican and the red flag*, pp. 44-45.

¹³¹ *The Newman*, January 1957.

would be difficult and the idea was abandoned. Furthermore, a proposal for the printing of a Hungarian liturgy to assist the spiritual welfare of the Hungarians was rejected once it was realised that such a publication did in fact already exist.¹³²

Aid offered by the Newman Association was not always felt to be appropriate.

Following attempts to enter into a dialogue with the Latvian Catholic Association of Great Britain, the organisation responded that, although it was very grateful for the offer of support, “we do not feel able to follow the high standards of the Newman Association which is students and intellectuals organisation. We have not many members who could be able to take active part in your meetings and discussions. Latvian Catholic Association in Great Britain is a very general organisation with aim to help poor Latvian Catholics.”.¹³³

By the early 1960s, the Newman Association began to scale back its aid programme to exiles generally. As early as 1957, the Newman International Committee noted the decreased scale of activity which it put down to “declining needs”, as well as “the

¹³² NIC Minutes, 17 December 1956.

¹³³ Letter from the Latvian Catholic Association of Great Britain, 29 August 1959, Newman International Committee, Country Files: Latvia, D1/E/1/2/15, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library.

difficulties in obtaining money for the purpose”.¹³⁴ Furthermore, Pax Romana was gradually subsuming the Association’s work with Catholic exiles. There had always been a strong link between Pax Romana and the Newman Association. For example, at the Twenty Third Pax Romana World Congress held at Nottingham University in 1954, 180 delegates (out of 300) were Newman Association members and 49 students supported by Newman bursaries attended.¹³⁵ The Association was also active on the Council of Pax Romana with Dr. Kevin MacDonnell representing in this capacity in 1961.¹³⁶ On the weekend of the 22-23 April 1961, a joint meeting of the Pax Romana Exiles Federations in Britain, the Newman Association, and the Union of Catholic Students was held in which it was decided to form a co-ordinating committee of Pax Romana Exiles Federations. The objects of this committee included: “The extension of the work of each national exile federation within the framework of Pax Romana”. Although the Newman Association (and the Union of Catholic Students) was to have representation on this committee, the Association appeared to hand over direct responsibility for aid to Catholic exiles to Pax Romana.¹³⁷ In November of the same year, the Newman Association sponsored a conference organised by the Pax Romana

¹³⁴ Aylward, *Fifteen years of international co-operation*, 17.

¹³⁵ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1955-1956, 7.

¹³⁶ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1961-1962, 3.

¹³⁷ Pax Romana Papers, 23 April 1961, D1/E/2/1, Newman Association Archive, Ushaw College Library.

Exile Federations in Britain on 'Materialism in the East and West'. Previously, this conference would have been organised by the Newman Association. Furthermore, in the same year, the Association also agreed to hand over all overseas non-university appointments work to the Catholic Overseas Appointment Bureau. This reflected a wider winding down of the scope of its remit more generally. For example, the full-time operation of the International Committee's Commonwealth and US Co-operation Programme came to an end also, although it was hoped that the work could continue on a voluntary or advisory basis.¹³⁸

Conclusion

The Newman Association provides an important case study for the involvement of Catholic lay societies in aiding exiles in the years following the Second World War. This support may have been inspired by a combination of anti-communism, pan-Europeanism, and a genuine altruism informed by Catholic social teaching, but it also emanated from a desire for lay educated Catholics to break out of the confines of their historically subordinate role within the Church, albeit with enthusiastic support and direction by the hierarchy. This encouraged the Newman Association, along with other

¹³⁸ Newman Association, *Annual Report*, 1961-1962, 4.

Catholic lay organisations, to assume greater responsibility for undertaking ambitious initiatives unthinkable earlier in the century. The establishment of the Newman Centre in London, largely staffed by volunteers, was a major achievement, providing a cultural and social hub for Catholics from across the world to meet and take part in educational talks and conferences on subjects of interest. The scholarship programme enabled many Polish students to undertake undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Britain and Ireland which would have been impossible within their own country, and, without the support of the Newman Association in the early years, such opportunities may not have existed at all. The nature of the Newman Association's support to Polish exiles changed over time, reflecting the relative fortunes of the treatment of Catholics in Communist countries. In the early post-war years, the priority was to assist Polish exiles in Britain. By the late 1950s, greater links were developed with organisations and individuals within Poland itself. By the early 1960s, however, the Newman Association was relinquishing much of its role in aiding Polish exiles to other organisations, notably Pax Romana, who assumed greater control of the Central and Eastern Exile programme for the Catholic Church. Further research needs to be carried out on the work of other lay societies, such as the Catholic Women's League involvement in Polish displacement camps, as well as other Catholic and non-Catholic organisations, to uncover the true extent of the largely hidden involvement of charitable organisations in the post-war world.